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SUBJECT: CSTC-A POLICE CENSUS: A FIRST-EVER HEAD COUNT

Summary

¶1. (SBU) From August 20 to September 5, Task Force Phoenix conducted a survey to verify the existence of Uniform, Border and Civil Order police on the ground in Afghanistan, comparing Ministry of Interior (MOI) payroll records with those present for duty. The survey reviewed payroll lists in 81 percent of the police districts throughout the country. The other 19 percent of districts were not surveyed, either because of their remoteness or security concerns. The survey verified the existence of 76 percent of the 45,731 police listed on the payrolls for the districts surveyed: in other words, 76 percent of the police in 81 percent of the districts were verified. On September 23, Combined Security Transition Command) Afghanistan (CSTC-A) Commander Major General Robert Cone briefed the international community on the results of the survey. While all acknowledged the limits of the methodology, there was general agreement that the survey represents the first solid data on police presence in the field and that the show rate was much better than many had expected based on past anecdotal information. End summary.

Background

¶2. (SBU) In recent months, police development planning has been increasingly hampered by uncertainty over the number of police on the ground. MOI personnel and payroll offices have reported varying figures for the same district, often seriously at odds with claims by local chiefs of police, the 2007 Tashkil (staffing plan) and the observations of PRT officers. Although unable to provide a convincing account of police in service, MOI interlocutors routinely press for higher police pay and new allowances (e.g., danger pay and an increased food allowance). Against that backdrop and

otherwise poor payroll accountability, Law and Order Trust Fund for Afghanistan (LOTFA) donors have been reluctant to adopt new commitments. Within the Security Operations Group and an ad hoc Afghan National Police (ANP) Pay Task Force chaired by UNAMA, the topic of poor payroll accountability festered into open discontent, while some partners in the international community (IC) estimated that as few as 40 percent of police listed in payroll records were actually serving, at least in some districts.

¶3. (SBU) Between August 20 and September 5, Combined Security Transition Command Afghanistan (CSTC-A) conducted a head count of police in most districts, with some assistance from IC partners (e.g., the British in Helmand, the Canadians in Kandahar and the Dutch in Uruzgan). Teams visited districts with no more than 72 hours notice and compared police by name against payroll records, the 2007 Tashkil and MOI personnel numbers. Individual police were physically verified and were not counted if on leave, sick, AWOL or deceased. Teams also verified individuals by their police ID cards, where available. Security and logistical considerations in some districts precluded visits by census teams. Surveyors did not visit the provinces of Badakhshan, Daikundi, Nurestan, Bamyán or Nimroz. Parts of Badghis, Ghor, Ghazni and Helmand were also excluded.

Results: Better than Expected

¶4. (SBU) Surveyors were able to account for 76 percent of the police on payroll in the districts surveyed: 80 percent of the 50,215 Afghan Uniform Police (AUP), 55 percent of 8,748

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the Afghan Border Police (ABP) and all of the 518 Afghan National Civil Order Police (ANCOP).

¶5. (SBU) Verified AUP numbers in the high-conflict south and east were 81 and 85 percent of those on payroll in districts surveyed, respectively. As expected, numbers were even higher in Kabul and the central region (where better implementation of the Electronic Payments System inhibits payroll fraud). Surprisingly, however, the relatively calm north and west did more poorly, with 76 percent of AUP verified in the west and 65 percent in the north.

¶6. (SBU) The ABP were particularly difficult to count, owing largely to their remoteness: surveyed districts included only 55 percent of those on payroll. Of those surveyed, 87 percent were verified as being on duty, or 47 percent of the total ABP on payroll.

Other Notes

¶7. (SBU) Placed side by side with both MOI payroll figures and the 2007/1386 Tashkil, the survey reveals some striking imbalances. For example, The conflict-riven eastern provinces are authorized 8,361 police positions, while MOI payroll contains 3,110 individuals, of whom 2,651 were physically verified; thus, 32 percent of authorized positions were verified as being filled, suggesting severe difficulties with recruitment. (In the south, no less volatile, figures were rather better: against 8,410 authorized positions, MOI has 7,688 on payroll, and 6,235 were verified -- thus, 74 percent of authorized positions were filled.) In the northern provinces, 7,833 positions are authorized, 9,505 police are paid, and 6,193 were verified, suggesting significant payroll irregularities. The 2007/1386 Tashkil authorizes 70,729 police positions in all, excluding the 11,271 Afghan National Auxiliary Police (ANAP) positions.

¶8. (SBU) While the police ID-card program is still struggling to register police in some areas, it has made real strides,

with 64,379 registered and 43,275 cards printed as of September 25. Every region (north, south, east, west and central) has some provinces where fewer than fifty percent of Afghan Uniform Police (AUP) surveyed held ID cards, and there was no penetration of the ID-card program evidenced in Nangarhar and Wardak. Notably, within a single area, units sometimes varied widely in ID-card implementation. For example, among ABP in the western region, border police at the Herat Airport had 100-percent compliance, while the Sixth Brigade Headquarters in the same region had only 18-percent compliance.

Context: Other Reported Numbers

¶9. (SBU) Afghan police watchers will note that the survey does not include ANAP or the MOI headquarters in Kabul. While the combined MOI payroll for AUP, ABP and ANCOP plus district police officials is 59,876, the UNDP-administered Law and Order Trust Fund for Afghanistan (LOTFA) reported paying 72,470 police between April 2006 and March 2007; however, the latter figure includes some 11,074 ANAP (CSTC-A figure as of September 15). As an additional point of comparison, DynCorp has trained some 73,262 individuals, excluding ANAP and corrected for individuals taking multiple courses. Many of those trained are believed to have gone AWOL, and a substantial number have been killed or gone missing in action. (Note: Thirty to fifty ANP per week are reported KIA. End note.)

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Well-Received by International Partners

¶10. (SBU) CSTC-A Commander Major General Robert Cone briefed the international community on September 23 on the results of the survey. While all acknowledged the limits of the methodology, there was general agreement that the survey represents the first solid data on police presence in the field and that the 80 percent show rate for AUP was much better than many expected based on past anecdotal information. IC participants included UNAMA, the EU, EUPOL, and representatives from the UK, Australian, Dutch, German, New Zealand, Italian and Canadian Embassies. Questions focused on data that this survey was not designed to collect, in particular that would permit conclusions to be drawn regarding the effectiveness of ANP performance. The UNAMA representative expressed interest in working with CSTC-A on subsequent surveys. The EU Mission DCM welcomed the survey and noted that, despite the methodological limitations, the results should reassure donors that MOI financial controls are effective.

Comment

¶11. (SBU) While conditions in Afghanistan prevented a complete survey, this effort represents a significant contribution to USG, IC and IROA understanding of policing realities. It was very well received by the international community and establishes a new basis for dialogue about police assistance. Follow-on surveys, planned at a rate of ten to fifteen percent of the 345 districts per month, ensures the continuing utility of these data as a means of gauging MOI progress on reform and of assessing the effectiveness of police training and mentoring programs. End comment.
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